

Leaday School
Leaday townsite
Intersection of Farm Roads
2134 and Leaday-Hill Road
Voss Vicinity
Coleman County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3353

HABS
TEX
42-VOS.V,
10-

~~MEASURED DRAWINGS~~

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Building Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
LEADAY SCHOOL

I. INTRODUCTION

Location: Located west of the intersection of Ranch Road 2134 and the Leaday-Hill Road, Leaday townsite, Coleman County, State of Texas

Quad: USGS Leaday Quadrangle

UTM: 14.436030.3491769

Date of construction: circa 1906 & 1917

Present Owner: Permanent easement was granted in 1987 to the Colorado River Municipal Water District Big Spring, Texas.

Present Use: Abandoned

Significance: The Leaday school is a one-story woodframe structure which served as the auditorium and probably additional classroom space for a small complex of buildings begun about 1906 as a response to the sudden population growth in the vicinity of the new town of Leaday. The auditorium structure, built about 1917, remains as one of a handful of structures left standing in the deserted little town, once the center of a sizeable group of tenant farms established on the adjacent Day-Padgitt and Day-Miller Ranches. As well as serving its educational purpose, the structure also functioned as the common community meeting hall for a period of almost thirty years.

Historian: Gus Hamblett, Texas A&M University. September 1989

II. HISTORY

A. AN OVERVIEW OF HISTORICAL CONTEXT

For the general historical overview which places the property in the context of the development of cattle ranching at the confluence of the Colorado and Concho Rivers please see HABS No. TX-3350.

B. EARLY SCHOOLS IN THE LEADAY VICINITY

The first school in the vicinity of the Leaday townsite (HABS No. TX-3362) was built about 1874.¹ It was located about two miles northwest of the present Leaday school at a site called Yellow Bluff on the Colorado River, between the old Trap Crossing of the river (HABS No. TX-3361) and pioneer Rich Coffey's homestead (HABS No. TX-3354). The next school was begun by Rich Coffey and his neighbor Robert Alexander; Alexander's ranch was on lands which later became the Gann Ranch (HABS No. TX-3358). Coffey and Alexander established their school across from the old Yellow Bluff school on the Concho County side of the Colorado. Among the first students at this second school were members of the local early ranching families of Creswell (HABS No. TX-3352 and HABS No. TX-3356) and McLane (HABS No. TX-3355). Apparently this or other locations in the immediate vicinity continued in service as schools as late as 1904, the date of a school district designation; the district was called Trap District #24, the number changed later in the same year to #29.²

C. NECESSITY FOR A NEW SCHOOL

A site near the famous Trap Crossing, an old and much-traveled crossing on the Colorado River on the old road from Coleman to Fort Concho, was chosen for the new town of Leaday.³ The town was staked out in December, 1904, by local rancher Mabel Doss Day Lea

on her great Day Ranch lands at a period when she was planning a subdivision of the ranch into tenant farms and erecting a new ranch headquarters house near Trap Crossing.⁴ (For a more comprehensive history of the Day Ranch and vicinity and biographical information on William and Mabel Day see HABS No. TX-3351: Mahel Doss Day Lea House and HABS No. TX-3362: Leaday Townsite.) The town was intended to accommodate prospective homesteaders and to serve them once they settled in the vicinity. It satisfied these functions well for a number of years, serving two generations of tenant farmers with a post office, a few stores, a gin, a hotel, a church, and a new school. The town was formally platted and the drawing of the town plan filed at the Coleman County Courthouse in March, 1906.⁵ Although never completed to the extent of its ambitious first plan, and although it began to shrink after the first ten or fifteen years of its life, the little town and its town plan have survived in the basic configuration of the strong north-south axis of Main Street, along which were strung the hotel, an unfinished bank building, a church, various houses, and, to the southern extremity of the street, on its east side, a town block allocated for a school.

D. CONSTRUCTION CHRONOLOGY

The area schools' Trap District designation was changed in 1906 to Leaday District, keeping the same district number (District Number Twenty-nine); and the first Leaday school building was probably begun in that year.⁶ It was constructed on a site on south Main Street, roughly in the area allotted for a school on the plan drawing; this remained the permanent school grounds site. The first structure has not survived, but was probably a small woodframe classroom structure of two or three rooms. In the Coleman County Commissioners' Court Minutes for 4 June 1917 is notice of a school bond election for the purpose of constructing a woodframe

structure at Leaday school.⁷ This appears to refer to the construction of the only structure presently existing on the site: a one-story woodframe auditorium building with a large seating space and a small stage. It is known that there was eventually a small complex consisting of the auditorium and a classroom unit (probably the original school building), with separate outhouse toilets for boys and girls.⁸ These privies were erected by the Works Progress Administration.⁹

The existing building has much in common with other Coleman County rural school buildings of the period 1914-1927. The characteristics of this type are a square or nearly-square massing, light-weight woodframe construction, hipped roofs, multipaned wood sash windows, railroad siding. Examples are the 1911 Burket school building, the 1914 Buffalo school, the 1916 Liberty school, the 1917 Concho Peak school, the 1918 Plainview school, the 1919 New Central school, the 1927 Grape Creek school. The school built at the little neighboring town of Voss in 1917, of stone construction, but otherwise strikingly similar, may have been one of a group of prototypes for these local woodframe school buildings constructed in a period when large new tenant populations in the area gave necessity for many new rural schools in little cross-roads communities and on the large ranches.¹⁰

E. SUBSEQUENT CHRONOLOGY

In the 1936-1937 school year the Leaday high school students were consolidated with the school at the Mozelle community.¹¹ Various Leaday residents drove the school buses when the several schools on the Day-Padgitt and Day-Miller Ranches were consolidated in the 1930s, often giving local families rides into Leaday and Ballinger on Saturdays for shopping.¹² One of the Leaday school trustees had the job of maintaining the school grounds. He and his son would clean

out the privies at night, put the waste in barrels in a wagon, and haul it into the countryside for dumping.¹³

The subdivision of the Day Ranch begun by Mahel Doss Day Lea and continued by her successors on the Day-Padgitt and Day-Miller Ranches succeeded to an extent for a number of years. However, the failure of cotton markets and the impact of the Depression disintegrated the tenant policy.¹⁴ The population began to dwindle, the tenant farm lands were gradually reintegrated into the Day-Padgitt and Day-Miller Ranches. In 1938 the Leaday School property was deeded back to Willie Day Padgitt.¹⁵

The town of Leaday had begun to shrink after the first fifteen years of its life. Leaday suffered further after World War II when automobiles became plentiful and local residents could then easily reach the large market towns of Coleman or Ballinger; and it was much depleted by the 1950s and all but totally abandoned by the late 1980s.¹⁶

III. THE LEADAY SCHOOL: DESCRIPTION

A. GENERAL STATEMENT AND CONDITION OF STRUCTURE

Located on a flat plain north of a high bluff on a bend of the Colorado River, the school grounds were near the south end of the Leaday main artery of Main Street, these grounds intersected in recent times by a rerouting of Farm/Ranch Road #2134, which is Leaday's main connection with the town of Voss to the northeast.

The school buildings complex in its final growth stages was composed of the existing auditorium building; a boys' privy and a girls' privy, fragments of which survive; and a classroom wing, which no longer exists. The classroom and auditorium were of one-

story woodframe construction typical for area schools in the period of the first twenty years of the twentieth century. The privies were small woodframe structures with concrete toilets; they were Works Progress Administration projects, probably built at the end of the 1930s.

As mentioned, the classroom wing no longer exists. The condition of the existing structure, the auditorium building, is rapidly deteriorating. It has been abandoned and neglected for many years. The roof's original wood shingles have never been replaced and have fallen away from large areas of the roof. Many panes are missing from the windows, and the wood siding has been removed from a great part of the west face of the building.

B. GENERAL CONFIGURATION AND DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR

The existing auditorium structure, which no doubt always functioned as additional classroom space, is a one-story hipped-roofed woodframe structure, rectangular in form, with its long axis running east and west, approximately thirty feet wide and fifty feet long. Its primary entrance was a porch in the center of the north face of the building, probably originally oriented toward a side street or drive leading off Main Street; a double doorway is located at this entrance. (Main Street, which at its southern extremity has been obscured by Farm/Ranch Road #2134, originally skirted the building and grounds to the east.) A secondary entrance was in the center of the narrow north face of the building, this doorway unbeltered by a porch and possibly originally part of a connecting link or hyphen with the missing and possibly older classroom wing. A third doorway, a service door to the backstage area, is located toward the north end of the west face of the building.

The foundation of the building is a continuous concrete footing. There is a concrete footing for the large north porch laid with a concrete slab floor. Exterior door openings are woodframed, hung with wood doors of the five-stacked-panels type. There are no window openings on the east and west faces of the building and only one on the north face, but on the south face almost two-thirds of the wall surface is broken into bands and pairs of windows. All windows are large double-hung wood-sashed windows of the nine-over-nine pane pattern and are placed high in the walls, their tops reaching almost to the eaves. A footing, scattered bricks on the ground, and a shadowline on the exterior wall surface locate the original place of a brick chimney-stack approximately in the center of the south face of the building; this stack served as a stove flue. The roof is a low-pitched hip roof, covered in wood shingles laid over purlin strips and two-inch-by-four-inch rafters. There is no fascia board, and the rafter ends are exposed.

C. DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR

The plan is essentially one large room with a twelve foot ceiling height. The west end of the room was raised for a width of twelve feet as a platform stage, approximately two-and-a-half feet above the main floor level. The stage was approached by short flights of steps to either side which led to a narrow passage partitioned from the stage area and allowed circulation around the rear of the stage and access to the west service door. The pine flooring is one-inch-by-six-inch tongue-and-groove stock. Walls and ceiling are sheathed with one-inch-by-four-inch tongue-and-groove pine stock lumber. Finishes are very simple, and there are no decorative elements.

D. ALTERATIONS

Despite its poor condition, the auditorium structure has been very little altered. The woodframe boys' and girls' privies, located respectively about two hundred thirty feet to the southeast and one hundred seventy feet northwest, no longer exist; but the cast concrete privy seats are still in place, one of them stamped: "W P A."

E. OWNERSHIP AND FUTURE

In 1979 the Texas Water Commission granted permission to the Colorado River Municipal Water District, an entity based in Big Spring, to construct a large dam on the Colorado River. The site chosen was a location several miles downstream from Leaday, sixteen miles below the confluence of the Colorado and Concho Rivers. Early in the planning stages, a program was developed to address environmental concerns, including the impact of the proposed flood area on prehistoric and historic cultural resources. In 1980-1981 a survey of historic cultural resources was conducted by Freeman and Freeman under contract to Espey, Huston and Associates, a firm of Austin environmental consultants. Subsequently a number of other studies and amplifications of previous studies have been conducted. In early 1988 an Albuquerque, New Mexico, firm of environmental scientists, Mariah Associates, Inc., began further assessment of the area of the flood plain, including various archaeological investigations and assessments. Mariah has also acted in the role of coordinator of related projects, including this project: the recordation of nineteen endangered historic sites in the confluence area for the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record. The sites were selected from a list compiled under the guidance of the Texas Historical Commission.

Construction was finished on the dam in the late summer of 1989. Called the Stacy Dam and Reservoir, the project will inundate approximately 19,200 acres and possibly the entire Leaday townsite.

Permanent easement has been granted to the Colorado River Municipal Water District by the Padgett heirs in 1987.¹⁷ In that year the Leaday post office was dismantled. As the Stacy Dam neared completion and possible inundation seemed possible, the Leaday Baptist Church was moved in September 1989, to higher ground at the Leaday Cemetery, one mile to the east of the townsite. The abandoned school remains on its site.

IV. ENDNOTES

1. For a discussion of the early schools in the Leaday vicinity, see Ralph Terry's essay, "Leaday Schools," published in Coleman County Historical Commission, A History of Coleman County and Its People, vol. I, (San Angelo, Texas: Anchor Publishing Company, 1985), 152.

2. Ibid.

3. For a discussion of the Trap Crossing of the Colorado River, see Glen Wilson's essay, "Leaday," *ibid.*, 268-269.

4. *Ibid.*, 268.

5. The Leaday town plat as it was originally designed is bound into Deed Record vol. 45, 618, County Clerk's Office, Coleman County Courthouse.

6. Terry, 152.

7. Coleman County Courthouse, Commissioners' Court Minutes, vol. I, 109-113, 4 June 1917; this is a notice of a school bond election for the purpose of "...constructing and equipping a public free school of wood material...."

8. The reference to the complex is from an interview with Red Pyburn, Leaday vicinity, 11 October 1987; interview by Dan Utley, Texas Historical Commission.

9. One of the cast concrete privy bases has stamped into its surface: "W P A."

10. For contemporary photographs of the examples mentioned, see Coleman County Historical Commission, vol. 1., 119-188.

11. Terry, p. 152; also see Coleman County Historical Commission, vol. 1., 79.

12. Interview with Ralph and May Allen, Leaday, Texas, 14 June 1989; interview by Patrick O'Neill, Mariah Associates, Inc.

13. Ibid.

14. For a discussion of the various Coleman County relief organizations during this period, see Glynn Mitchell's essay, "The Depression," published in Coleman County Historical Commission, vol. 1., 77-80.

15. Coleman County Courthouse, Deed Record vol. 67, 626, 3 and 8 August 1938, Coleman County School Trustees to Willie Day Padgitt; this document returned the school site lands to the ownership of the Day-Padgitt Ranch.

16. Interview with James Stephenson, Coleman, Texas, 15 June 1989; interview by Patrick O'Neill, Mariah Associates, Inc.

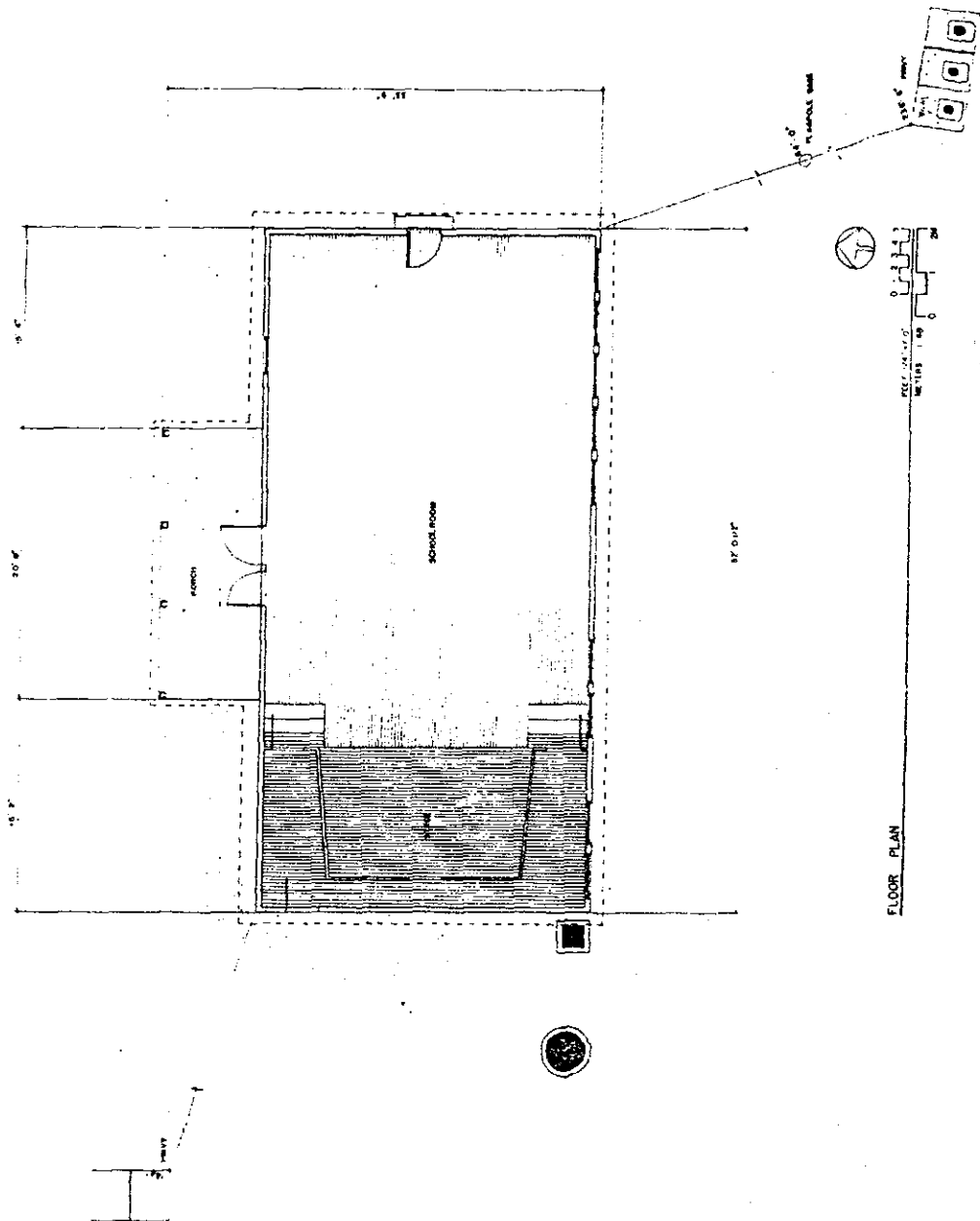
17. Coleman County Courthouse, Deed Record vol. 601, 164, 14 September 1987; Lillian Maverick Padgitt and her heirs Lillian Padgitt Morris, Day Padgitt Kuntz and Jane Maverick Padgitt grant permanent permanent easement to the Colorado River Municipal Water District.

V. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Sketch plan

VI. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was sponsored by Mariah Associates, Inc., archaeologists; recorded under the direction of Greg Kendrick, HABS regional coordinator, Denver. The project was completed during the summer of 1989 at the project field office at Houston and College Station, Texas. Project supervisor was Graham B. Luhn, A. I. A., architect; project architectural historian was Gus Hamblett, Texas A&M University; intern architects were Dehhic Fernandez and Paul Neidinger; student architects were Brian Dougan, Robert Holton, Janna Johnson, Wayne Jones, and Pat Sparks, Texas A&M University; project photographer was Paul Neidinger, photographic processing by Laura McFarlane.



VOSS VIGNETTE

LEADAY SCHOOL
COLEMAN COUNTY

TEXAS 1933
TX-3353